



# *The Old Ironsides Report*



## 1AD, civil affairs seek to help handicapped center

By Spc. Ryan Smith, 372nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Broken wheelchairs lie in heaps behind a center for disabled Iraqis. Inside, X-ray machines and rehabilitation equipment rot away, unused and in disrepair.

The Ekrema Rehabilitation Center in central Baghdad specializes in treating and rehabilitating handicapped people living here. Before the war, it fell under the auspices of Iraq's Ministry of Defense, treating only soldiers wounded by Iraq's wars.

However, since coalition forces entered Iraq and the establishment of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the center is now a part of the Iraqi Ministry of Health, meaning all handicapped citizens needing treatment—women, children and men who were not injured as soldiers—now can receive medical care at the center.

But even without the new influx of patients, the center is in poor condition to treat anyone. Neglect by the former regime and damage from looting have left the center in a state of disrepair.

Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 1st Field Artillery Regiment, a 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division unit, working along with soldiers from the 490th Civil Affairs Battalion, an Army Reserve unit from Abilene, Texas, have begun work to clean up the center and help to repair or replace damaged equipment and repair structural damage, according to Maj. Kevin West, operations officer for 4-1 Field Artillery.

West and Capt. Judith Christians, civil affairs officer with the 490th, visited the center to meet with its director and to assess its facilities Sept. 25.

West initially learned of the center when soldiers from his unit were conducting a money exchange earlier this year. The soldiers were exchanging 250 dinar notes for the defunct 10,000 dinar notes, and a large number of handicapped people arrived.

In order to better accommodate the handicapped, West came back to the Ekrema Rehabilitation Center to exchange money there. He found the center in a state of disrepair.

Though helping to stand a medical center back on its feet is hardly what a field artillery officer is trained for, West said he saw that these people needed help.

"We had a lot of looting damage," said Dr. Abdul Rahman, the director of the center. At one point during the soldiers' visit, Rahman pointed at a vacant spot on the ceiling of a room where a fan once hung and said, "Ali Baba."

Because of the damage the center has been unable to function.

"There were about 4,000 war handicapped who came here, but with the civilians now there are 6,000 or more," Rahman said.

With help from the U.S. soldiers, the center should soon be able to operate again.

"There's a lot of cleanup to be done," Christians said, "Many of the windows and doors need to be replaced, and they need new furniture and rehabilitation equipment."



**Capt. Judith Christians, civil affairs officer, 490th Civil Affairs Battalion, looks through a stack of medical records at the Ekrema Rehabilitation Center in Baghdad.**

While Christians and the other civil affairs soldiers will work through CPA and non-governmental organizations, West has another source in mind.

"Back home, I have a cousin who is a retired missionary," he said. "He'll be able to get donations of equipment to send here to help these people."

Christians said she feels a sense of empathy for the former soldiers who receive treatment at the center. In one room, there is a pile of thousands of medical records.

"These thousands of files are loosely bundled on the floor of this room," Christians said. "From soldier to soldier, I'd like to see these records sorted out and for these soldiers' families to know what may have become of their loved ones."

Work on the center is set to begin within a week, West said. First, he will bring a team of hired Iraqis to clean up the site.

Once the center is cleaned up and the structural damage is repaired, the soldiers will focus on helping to bring the rehabilitation equipment back to standard.

Iraqis will do the majority of the work, and the Ministry of Health will oversee most of it, in order to put the future of Iraq back into the hands of its citizens.

"It's good to know there will be a place where disabled people can get help," Christians said. "I only wish more people could contribute."

## NEWS

### **Source Confirms Limbaugh Investigation**

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) - Conservative commentator Rush Limbaugh stunned listeners of his nationwide radio show by announcing on the air that he's hooked on painkillers and is checking himself into rehab. Law enforcement sources who spoke on condition of anonymity confirmed to The Associated Press that Limbaugh was being investigated for by the Palm Beach County, Fla., state attorney's office.

### **AP: Israeli Strike May Derail Syria Talks**

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - Israel's military attack on Syrian soil is threatening to derail secret European and U.N. diplomatic efforts to bring the two Mideast enemies back to the negotiating table and could stall a planned Israeli-Hezbollah prisoner swap, the Associated Press has learned from officials involved. The exploratory diplomatic efforts, which until now have been kept quiet, are the results of a yearlong negotiation for the prisoner swap and an offer this summer from Syrian President Bashar Assad to restart peace talks with Israel that fell apart in March 2000, diplomats said on condition of anonymity.

### **Feds Blast Robertson for Nuke Comment**

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (AP) - The U.S. State Department has condemned an on-air suggestion by religious broadcaster Pat Robertson that the agency ought to be blown up with a nuclear device. Robertson, who heads the Virginia Beach-based Christian Broadcasting Network, made the remark while interviewing author Joel Mowbray on "The 700 Club" television program last week. Mowbray wrote a book called "Dangerous Diplomacy: How the State Department Endangers America's Security."

### **41 Taliban Escape From Afghanistan Jail**

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AP) - More than 40 Taliban militants escaped from a southern Afghanistan prison by digging a 30-foot-long tunnel and with apparent help from officials, regional leaders said Saturday. The 41 escaped convicts - including several Taliban commanders and the brother of former Taliban defense minister, Mullah Ubaidullah - disappeared late Friday from a high-security prison in the city of Kandahar, said Yousaf Pashtoon, the governor of Kandahar province.

### **Gov. Davis Does 'Top Ten' on Letterman**

Gov. Gray Davis got a chance to reshape his staid public image with a cameo appearance Friday on David Letterman's "Late Show." The second governor in U.S. history to be recalled from office, Davis has never been known for his sense of humor. Nevertheless, the Democrat jumped at the chance Thursday to tape the popular "Top Ten" countdown for Letterman, offering bits of advice to his Republican successor, actor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

### **Athens Torch Relay Hits Bumpy Stretches**

ATHENS, Greece (AP) -- Olympic flames have crisscrossed Europe, climbed the Rocky Mountains and skimmed Australia's Great Barrier Reef. Organizers for the Athens Games now want to send the torch relay on its first global journey with stops in Africa and South America.

But the route, to be announced Tuesday, has hit some bumpy patches. Some cities have complained about demands concerning sponsors and the selection of torchbearers. Some think Athens should help offset the costs.

The trip, which lasts more than two months and involves about 10,000 torchbearers through some 25 countries, could be the last of its kind.

In June, the IOC presented about 100 recommendations to contain Olympic costs. Limiting the relay to the host country was among them. Athens organizers have said they will pay about \$23.2 million, with additional costs covered by sponsors.

Athens officials and relay coordinator ALEM International would not comment before the presentation. ALEM, of Boulder, Colo., organized the relay for the Atlanta and Salt Lake City Olympics.

The flame is expected to pass through all former summer Olympic cities from Berlin, which first used the relay in 1936, to Sydney, the 2000 host. Beijing, site of the 2008 Games, is on the route that will end in Athens on Aug. 13.

In Egypt - in the first relay in Africa - the flame will pass the pyramids, said Ismail Hamid, secretary general of the Egyptian Olympic Committee. The flame will be flown from South Africa to Brazil for its first South American visit.

Finland, host of the 1952 Helsinki Games, is critical of demands by Athens organizers to advertise its sponsors and have a say on who would participate.

"We may well arrange it but we aren't going to foot the whole bill," said Jouko Purontakanen, secretary-general of the Finnish Olympic Committee.

Amsterdam's planners complain Athens organizers have said relay sponsors will provide nearly half the torchbearers.

Japan is seeking financial help for its relay to Tokyo, the 1964 host. Koji Hosokura, a spokesman for the Japanese Olympic Committee, said the cost could reach \$862,000.

"A request for financial assistance seemed appropriate considering it is an Olympic event," Hosokura said.

### Chaplain's Thought for the Day:

#### **What's Inside**

The story is told of a woman who went to her first show at an art gallery and was looking at the paintings. One was a huge canvas that had black with yellow blobs of paint splattered all over it. The next painting was a murky gray color that had drips of purple paint streaked across it. The lady walked over to the artist and said, "I don't understand your paintings."

"I paint what I feel inside me," explained the artist.

"Have you ever tried Alka-Seltzer?"

Every day, all of us do exactly what the artist above said -- we express what's on the inside. We express it in the words that we speak. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things." (Matthew 12:34-35)

As someone once said, "The heart of the matter is the matter of the heart." We can't fix what's on the outside until we fix what's wrong on the inside.